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# Georgia Southern professor brings national attention to dangerous new drug trend

JUNE 29, 2015



A Georgia Southern professor is bringing national media attention to a dangerous new drug trend called “dabbing.”

Bryan Miller, Ph.D., associate professor of criminal justice and criminology, is the co-author of the recent article, “Assessing the Dangers of ‘Dabbing’: Mere Marijuana or Harmful New Trend?” which was recently featured in the magazine *Pediatrics*. He says the article is not only a way to educate the public about this disturbing trend, but also calls for extensive research since so little is known about its short-term and long-term effects.

“We’ve seen a lot of headlines calling it the ‘crack’ of marijuana,” he said. “I don’t know if that’s necessarily a fair characteristic. I think there are inherent dangers associated with it that need to be

assessed more so than flower cannabis, but we need to better understand who’s using it, how they’re using it and how to reduce those kinds of harms with both manufacturing and consuming this new form of marijuana.”

According to the article, dabbing is essentially the inhalation of a concentrated form of tetrahydrocannabinol, more commonly known as THC, the psychoactive ingredient in marijuana. This concentrated substance is called butane hash oil (BHO), a gooey, amber-colored, highly potent substance that can reach THC concentrations of almost 80 percent.

In order to inhale one of these “dabs” of BHO, users procure a special kind of “male” water bong called an “oil rig” with a titanium rod called a “nail.” Using a blowtorch, they heat the nail to temperatures greater than 700 degrees, drop the dab on the nail and then inhale the dab as it instantly vaporizes. Miller says users have compared dabbing to smoking several marijuana cigarettes in one breath, and it’s almost impossible to say how much THC a user will inhale with each dab, depending on size, purity and concentration.

“Although there haven’t been cases of overdosing, people can faint, people can fall — all kinds of negative consequences associated with consuming that much THC that rapidly,” Miller said. “Plus, we don’t know about the short-term/long-term effects.”

In addition to the high THC levels consumed in dabbing, Miller says an even greater cause for concern is the home manufacturing of BHO, known as "blasting." The process involves taking dried marijuana plants and placing them in a tube with butane to extract the THC.

Because butane is such a volatile substance, however, several states have reported blasting-related fires and explosions comparable to those of a meth lab. Initially, the states reporting these kinds of accidents were confined to medical and retail marijuana states like Washington, Colorado and California, where BHO fires killed more than 30 people in 2014. Now, however, similar fires are being reported in prohibition states such as North Carolina and most recently in Florida.

Miller also says he has anecdotal evidence to suggest that the trend has already made its way into Statesboro as well.

Since the article ran in the July issue, local media outlets throughout the nation as well as national media outlets such as NBC News have brought attention to dabbing and its dangers. And while the Georgia Southern professor feels some of the media attention has been sensational, he hopes it will garner the attention of the research community.

"There's a lot of research to do on this," he said. "We've started collecting some of the data available, but there's a lot of research that needs to be done."